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Message Text

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ACTION NEA-11

INFO OCT-01 AF-10 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05
H-01 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02
SS-15 ICA-11 ACDA-12 IO-13 /112 W
----------082271 300833Z /10
R 281500Z JUN 78
FM AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5604
INFO AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM
AMEMBASSY LAGOS
AMEMBASSY LIBREVILLE
AMEMBASSY NDJAMENA
AMEMBASSY NIAMEY
AMEMBASSY PARIS

C O N F I D E N T I A L TRIPOLI 0895

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PEPR, LY, CH, SU
SUBJECT: COMMENT ON LIBYAN INTENTIONS TOWARDS CHAD

REF: (A) NDJAMENA 2497, (B) CAIRO 15840, (C) TRIPOLI 0893

1. NEW MANEUVERS AIMED AT RESUMING STALLED CHAD RECONCILIATION TALKS (REFTEL C) ARE OCCURRING AT A TIME WHEN THERE ARE INCREASING REPORTS OF LIBYA'S PURPORTED INTENTIONS TO DIRECTLY INTERVENE IN CHAD. ALTHOUGH THE TRIPOLI DIPLOMATIC CORPS IS ABUZZ WITH REPORTS -- SOME OF WHICH HAVE BEEN CONFIRMED -- OF TANK MOVEMENTS SOUTH OF SEBHA AND TROOP CONCENTRATIONS AND AIR FORCE REINFORCEMENTS NEAR KUFRA, WE THINK THERE IS LITTLE LIKELIHOOD OF ANY LIBYAN MILITARY MOVE AGAINST CHAD. THE LIBYANS ARE PLAYING THE LONG GAME IN CHAD. THEY KNOW A LARGE FRENCH MILITARY PRESENCE WILL NOT BE SUSTAINED FOREVER, AND THAT FROLINAT IS ALREADY IN CONTROL OF WELL OVER HALF OF THE COUNTRY. OUTRIGHT LIBYAN INTERVENTION IN
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THE FACE OF THE DEMONSTRATED FRENCH INTENTION TO KEEP FROLINAT'S TERRITORIAL CONTROL WITHIN DEFINITE LIMITS WOULD BE OUT OF CHARACTER FOR THE HERETOFORE TIMID LIBYANS.

2. IF ANYTHING, LIBYA -- FAR FROM CONCENTRATING ITS FORCES IN ANY ONE AREA -- HAS DISPERSED THEM ALONG THE EASTERN AND SOUTHERN FRONTIERS IN AN ATTEMPT TO PROTECT

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ITSELF FROM WHAT IT APPARENTLY BELIEVES IS A GENUINE
WESTERN/EGYPTIAN/SUDANESE PLOT AGAINST IT. THE
OFFICIAL LIBYAN ACCUSATION AGAINST THE US LAST WEEK IS
BUT THE LATEST MANIFESTATION OF THIS PARANOIA.

3. THE LIBYANS ARE ALSO CONCERNED BY WHAT THEY REGARD
AS OMINOUS EGYPTIAN RECONNAISSANCE ACTIVITIES BOTH OVER
AND ACROSS THEIR MUTUAL BORDERS. PARTIALLY AS A RESULT
OF THESE ACTIVITIES, THE SUDANESE EMBASSY REPORTS THAT
LIBYA HAS STATIONED AT LEAST FORTY-FIVE LANDROVERS BETWEEN
KUFRA AND THE BORDER IN AN ATTEMPT TO MONITOR
THE FLOW OF TRAVELLERS IN THE VICINITY. THIS MOVE FOLLOWS
A STRANGE INCIDENT TEN DAYS AGO IN WHICH TWO FIAT
ARTICULATED TRUCKS CARRYING 120 PASSENGERS OF MIXED
NATIONALITY (LIBYAN/CHADIAN/SUDANESE) WERE REPORTEDLY
ATTACKED BY AN "UNKNOWN" AIRCRAFT WELL WITHIN SUDANESE
TERRITORY NEAR WADI HUWAR. FOLLOWING THIS EPISODE, IN
WHICH 14 PERSONS WERE KILLED, TWO LIBYAN VEHICLES WERE
SENT TO THE SCENE OF THE ATTACK TO INVESTIGATE AND THEN
RETURNED TO KUFRA. (SUDANGOV WAS NOT NOTIFIED). CLOSE
MONITORING OF THE LIBYAN-SUDANESE BORDER WAS THEN UNDER-
TAKEN. THE SUDANESE EMBASSY, WHICH RECEIVED INITIAL WORD
OF THIS INCIDENT FROM TRAVELLERS IN THE AREA, STRONGLY
IMPLIED THAT THE ATTACKING AIRCRAFT WAS EGYPTIAN AND
THAT THESE TRUCKS WERE RETURNING TO KUFRA FROM CHAD
USING THE CIRCUITOUS SUDAN ROUTE TO MINIMIZE DETECTION.
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EMBASSY HAS NOT RECEIVED CONFIRMATION OF THIS REPORT
BUT IT IS INDICATIVE OF THE INCREASED TENSION ALONG
LIBYA'S FRONTIERS.
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